



## FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER



The Zero Waste Schools newsletter will help you get your school on a path toward generating zero waste through waste prevention, recycling, composting, and food recovery. You'll also find resources that connect zero waste to healthy eating, school gardens, and environmental education and action.

Share the newsletter with friends, colleagues, and students interested in zero waste.

[Sign up for ZWS news](#)

### New Year, two new schools go zero waste in January!



If January is any indication, this will be a good year for making schools more sustainable. Our Zero Waste Schools (ZWS) program had not one but two launches in January. The ZWS team was at Hawthorne Scholastic Academy and Deer Path Middle School to help reduce cafeteria and kitchen waste and get processes in place to ensure these schools can easily recycle and compost.

Increasingly, ZWS is prioritizing prevention over waste diversion. The

best way to reduce waste is to not create it in the first place.

On Wednesday, January 10th, the ZWS team helped launch Hawthorne Scholastic Academy, a K-8 school in Chicago Public Schools. Their initial zero waste launch included third through eighth grade, and they recently successfully launched kindergarten through second grade. Seven Generations Ahead's (SGA) Becky Brodsky says collaboration was key to their success. The lunch room staff, teachers, parent and student volunteers were all excited about the launch and eager to help.

"It was a team effort," she said. "They spent a lot of time thinking about the setup and the flow and making the sorting line as efficient as possible."

To read more, click [HERE](#).

[Evanston Township High School gets cooking](#)

## with equipment grant

Evanston Township High School, (ETHS), was awarded \$35,000 through the Hobart food prep equipment grant, which allowed the high school to purchase equipment to aid in their mission of creating a more sustainable lunchroom. ETHS is currently working to create meals on-site for their four cafeterias and to support surrounding elementary and preschool lunchrooms, as well.



Through the Hobart grant, ETHS purchased a HS9 automatic heavy-duty slicer, HCM61 bowl-style food processor, and three equipment stands.

Kimberly Minestra, ETHS Director of Nutrition Services, says that the equipment acquired through the grant is essential in helping the school district provide more semi-scratch cooked meals.

To read the full article, click [HERE](#) and to learn more about the equipment grant, click [HERE](#).

## Plastic Free Lunch Day



Participate in [Plastic Free Lunch Day USA](#) (PFLD) with schools and districts nationwide. Encourage your community to minimize single-use plastic one day between April 17 and April 24 as a starting point for an

ongoing commitment to reducing plastic every day.

With U.S. schools serving 7.35 billion meals annually, the use of single-use plastics in these meals significantly adds to the country's plastic waste stream. Join millions of public school students nationwide in this Earth Week climate action initiative, taking place right in their cafeterias! Click [HERE](#) to learn more and access PFLD quick start materials [HERE](#).

Consider meeting with your school's food service staff to implement one or more of these changes:

1. Replace single-use condiment packets with bulk service of sauces/dressings
2. Wrap sandwiches in bulk (put in serving trays with an aluminum foil cover instead of individually wrapped with plastic film)
3. Offer plastic utensils upon request only

Cafeteria Culture's award-winning student-led movie [Microplastic Madness](#) will screen FREE for all K-12 schools that lead a plastic-free action before April 30. [Registration](#) opens **March 1**.

## Beyond Plastics Pollution online course

Immerse yourself in the issue of plastic pollution by joining Bennington College's [Beyond Plastic Pollution online course](#) this spring.

Led by Judith Enck, the founder and president of [Beyond Plastics](#), this environmental policy class is **accessible to individuals of all ages, including high school and college students**.

It is designed for those who aspire to address the challenge of plastic pollution within their communities, states, and across the nation.



Wednesdays, 6 - 8 pm cst, April 17 - May 29  
Cost: \$100 to audit or \$400 to receive college credit.

Learn more and register [HERE](#). Email [capa@bennington.edu](mailto:capa@bennington.edu) for more information.

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## One Earth Collective Young Filmmakers Contest 2024



Students ages 8 through 25 are invited to submit their short environmental films to the [Young Filmmakers Contest](#) by **June 25**. Film topics vary depending on age level. Submissions must share and highlight solutions to the issues discussed in the chosen

sustainability topic(s). Scholarship awards, prizes, and matching grants (from \$100 to \$1000) are on offer for 3- to 8-minute films or 45+ second animations.

Winning films will be screened at the special Gene Siskel Film Center on **Sept. 22, 2024**, and/or at the [One Earth Film Festival](#) in **March 2025**.

Questions? Please contact Lisa Files at [lisa@oneearthfilmfest.org](mailto:lisa@oneearthfilmfest.org).

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## Green Schools Conference March 5 – 7, Santa Fe, NM

The Green Schools Conference (GSC) is the only event to bring together all stakeholders involved in making green schools a reality: people who lead, operate, build, and teach in schools. Designed to educate, connect, and inspire, attendees of this three-day in person conference will explore interdisciplinary content during general sessions, while also having dedicated time with peers to work through specific challenges, share best practices, and generate momentum to further green school actions across the country.



The 2024 program will focus on those leading their schools and school systems toward whole school sustainability. Attendees will learn from each other and will have the opportunity to connect with other green school champions.

GSC is presented by the [Center for Green Schools](#) at the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), in partnership with the [Green Schools National Network \(GSNN\)](#).

Register [HERE](#).

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## Grants and other opportunities

[Whole Kids Foundation Salad Bar Grant](#) Any district or independent school participating in the National School Lunch Program can apply. The grant program donates salad bars to U.S. schools to give kids daily access to fresh fruits and vegetables. **Applications are accepted on a rolling basis.**

[OurEcho Challenge](#) EarthEcho International invites students between the ages of 13-16 to apply for the 2024 OurEcho Challenge, a STEM competition focusing on biodiversity. Participants can work individually or in teams of up to three, proposing solutions to local ecosystem threats. The top 10 teams get a chance to present to experts, with grant awards of \$1,000, \$2,500, and \$5,000 for implementing their biodiversity projects with EarthEcho's support. **Deadline: Mar. 1.**

**Whole Kids Garden Grant** Schools and nonprofits have the potential to earn a \$3,000 grant to support or create an edible educational garden to educate students and community members about the importance of local food systems. **Deadline: Mar. 1.**

**Illinois Conservation Foundation's Conservation Achievement Scholarship** Awarded to 4 high school seniors in Illinois who have demonstrated effective, voluntary, and longterm dedication to the preservation, protection, enhancement, and/or promotion of Illinois' natural resources. **Deadline: Mar. 3.**

**School Nutrition Foundation Equipment Grants** Eligible applicants have the opportunity to win equipment grants, each worth between \$20,000 to \$100,000 of equipment. **Deadline: Mar. 29.**

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## Events

### **Innovation Hub Grant Call for Schools, Farmers, and Supporting Partners**

**Feb. 15, 22, 21**

IL Farm to School Network would like to invite you to join SGA's Colleen Feeney and Diane Chapeta (State Leads for Illinois) on individually focused virtual meetings for the Innovation Hub Spark Awards and Innovation Collaborative Awards focused specifically on school districts, farmers, and food system partners. Contact [Diane Chapeta](#) for more information.

### **19th Annual Chicago Food Justice Summit**

**Mar. 6 - 8, South Shore Cultural Center**

This year the Chicago Food Justice Summit will be held both virtually and in-person. Join local leaders and food policy experts to help reimagine Chicago's foodscape. Participants will attend sessions about how to turn food policy into community action.

### **Loyola University Chicago: Climate Change Conference**

**Mar. 15 - 16, Loyola University Chicago**

Loyola University Chicago's 2024 Climate Change Conference unites experts to explore global climate impact on food security and discuss strategies for equitable, resilient food systems. The event aims to deepen understanding, foster practical solutions, and inspire action for a just and sustainable world.

### **2024 EEAI Conference and Annual Meeting**

**Mar. 22 - 23, Decatur, IL**

This annual conference features a keynote speaker, exhibits, concurrent sessions, hands-on workshops, and field experiences—all centered around the conference theme "EEAI Goes Wild." Engage with environmental educators from across Illinois for two days of enriching learning, networking, and entertainment!

### **Food Waste Prevention Week**

**April 1 - 7**

Food waste prevention week is dedicated to fostering real cultural change on food waste. Participating in this week contributes to a cause that significantly impacts the reduction of food waste, promotes a healthier environment, saves families money, and addresses food insecurity in communities.

Seven Generations Ahead | [Email](#) | [Website](#)



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